

Water Allocation Program Advisory Committee (WAPAC)

A Partnership for Developing a Statewide Water Allocation Program

The RI Water Resources Board (Board) is charged by the legislature to manage the withdrawal and use of the waters in Rhode Island, apportioning it as necessary (RI Gen. Laws §46-15.7). Rather than embark independently, the Board has invited interested partners to serve on the Water Allocation Program Advisory Committee (WAPAC). The WAPAC acts as a “Committee of the Whole”, organized around the business process of managing water. It is an interdisciplinary, ad hoc committee that will undertake the task of recommending an overall work plan with budget for the water allocation program.

The WAPAC will be advised by subcommittees operating within eleven component areas. In the short-term (18 months), the WAPAC will identify program objectives, outcomes, milestones and timelines specifically related to implementing a water use registration system. Only by measuring the amounts and purposes of water withdrawn and used, will the state be able to make justifiable and legally defensible water allocation decisions. Additionally, the WAPAC will identify objectives, outcomes, milestones and timelines as they relate to the over-arching water allocation program. Ideally, the WAPAC will draft a preliminary, results-oriented, work plan within one year of startup.

WAPAC meetings will be held each month (see timeline). The two-hour sessions will be structured in three parts. First, subcommittee leaders will report on general progress and issues. Second, the WAPAC will synthesize the information and make recommendations for, or modifications to, the work plan. Third, a subcommittee representative will make an in-depth presentation on a single major program component for educational purposes. Ideally, the WAPAC (and its subcommittees) will employ an open, consensus-based, decision-making process built on a foundation of cooperation, collaboration and communication. There will be broad access to information and flexibility built into the process. Leadership, joint advocacy and administrative support will be required to sustain this mutually beneficial effort.

Role of the Subcommittees

Each subcommittee is led by primary and secondary organizations. The primary mission of the subcommittees is to define major program components and advise the WAPAC regarding how components relate to one another within the context of managing the withdrawal and use of the waters of the state. Committees should be interdisciplinary, thereby representative of diverse interests, authorities, perspective and expertise. Representation from the academic community, environmental community, water suppliers, and the private sector is highly recommended for each committee. Subcommittees are encouraged to conduct meetings in accordance with the state’s open meetings laws and access to public records laws. In addition to providing staff support to the WAPAC, the Water Resources Board will assist subcommittees with initial startup, provide organizational templates for agendas, meeting proceedings, timelines, etc., maintain a master calendar of meetings and oversee production of an Internet-based communications tool.

A. Primary Agency Administrative Responsibilities

- Recruit additional subcommittee members/expertise as needed
- Establish monthly meeting schedule (and/or virtual meeting schedule)
- Transmit electronic copies of agendas, meeting proceedings and resource list for posting to the Internet, preferably by the Monday preceding the WAPAC meeting
- Serve as the liaison/spokesperson to the WAPAC

B. Secondary Agency Administrative Responsibilities

- Assumes a leadership role in the absence of the primary agency, or as necessary